

WASHINGTON DAILY
NEWS

MAY 15 1964

Comment:



Corruption Weakens Red Cuba Regime

By VIRGINIA PREWETT

Fortress Cuba, the military Goliath of Latin America, reportedly has developed a new weakness that favors the militant exiles' chances to start a serious rebellion there. This is the Cuban people's reaction to black marketing by powerful Castro officials.

"Corruption has become so blatant that the people's contempt is beginning to overshadow their fear," says a spokesman of the Citizens' Committee for a Free Cuba. "Shortages affect every area of the people's lives, and prices are soaring. Cubans know that bribery and payments under the table to get government-controlled goods have become the rule."

90 PERCENT

The Committee, which compiles its information from interviews with Cuban escapees and from an information network inside Cuba, reported only last year that "90 percent of the Castro militia are held solely by fear."

If and when contempt and sheer revulsion against profiteering by Castro officials dissolves that fear sufficiently, a popular uprising against communist rule is possible.

Castro's high command does not trust the militia. The Citizens' Committee for a Free Cuba reveals the following:

For more than two years now, Havana's communist government has been quietly reducing the militia's firepower. Formerly, they were equipped with automatic rifles and submachine guns. These have been replaced

with semi-automatic and bolt-action rifles, mostly of Czechoslovakian and Belgian make. The militia must turn in their arms when off duty, and are never allowed to have more than five rounds of ammunition at a time.

Cuba's military might today is concentrated in the Rebel Army, which reportedly counts around 25,000 men. This force is well equipped with everything required by a modern army.

They have automatic rifles, submachine guns, grenades, flame-throwers. Their artillery includes weapons from 20-millimeter -- six-inch heavy artillery.

This army is supported by a Russian-trained air force that reportedly has as many as 150 Migs, late-model Russian jet fighters.

LARGE COMPLEX

The Cuban Communist state has a large complex of additional mechanisms to control the civilian population. The Committee for the Defense of the Revolution is a potent one. It comprises the block committees. A recent Cuban statement placed their membership at over 1.5 million men and women. Among others are youth organizations and the state-controlled labor unions.

Throughout the army, the militia, the block committees and other organizations, members of the Communist Party wield greatest power. Last year when three Cuban provinces were devastated by a hurricane, Communist Party officials took charge of communications, of food distribution, of all rescue work. They gave orders to both the army and the militia.